

Masthead Logo

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# Sleepwalker

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ROBERT THOMAS

*Sleepwalker*

One night I found you pumping water  
from the neighbors' well. Drinking greedily:  
nothing as fresh as the taste of iron. I let you  
finish. I watched your unsheathed thirst.  
When I woke you, a shudder  
like the shadow of a frenulum,  
the narrow band that keeps a moth's wings  
from tearing apart in flight, crossed your face  
before you recognized me, or was it  
just after, the moment just after  
I spoke your name, when you remembered  
it was yours.

In the morning you have bruises,  
inky thumbprints on your hips  
from bumping the porch grill, but you've never  
truly hurt yourself, and I never know  
whether to wake you, you seem so serene,  
as if walking on water and all the ocean  
were yours, not just the kelp  
and herring that glint in the sun,  
but the deeper layers, eels and rays  
in the vertical dusk, even the blind crustaceans  
in absolute dark, where light has nothing  
to do with what makes you thrive.

And then I witness the awful moment  
when the part usurps the whole,  
and the vast, porous surface of what you see with  
shrinks to the iron chink of an eye.